APPENDIX
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET

1. How much does the state provide to the Town per pupil for education?

The Town annually receives an Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. For 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the town is expected to receive $12,040,218, which is flat funded from the previous fiscal year (dependent upon the Governor's budget proposal). In general, the district's ECS funding will be reduced by approximately $320,000 per year until FY2028. The ECS monies are counted as revenue to the town.

2. What is the difference between Capital Improvement Projects and Buildings and Grounds Projects?

Capital Improvement projects usually consist of new construction, additions, modifications, or major improvements of a non- recurring nature. Other Buildings and Grounds projects are considered annually, and funding comes out of the Board's operating budget. Typically, projects include work like painting, electric repair, mechanical upgrades, replacing carpet, refinishing floors, etc. These projects are prioritized, scheduled, and overseen by the Director of Educational Operations in consultation with building Principals.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

3. What percentage of the Board of Education budget is dedicated to special education?

In the 2020-21 budget, special education total expenses equaled 19.57% of the Board of Education's overall budget. The proposed 2021-2022 budget percentage for special education is 20.04% This percentage typically changes year over year due to fluctuations in the number of students with services and the services they receive.

4. How does the percent of Colchester students in special education compare with the State average percent of students in special education?

According to the 2019-2020 District Profile and Performance Report (formerly the Strategic School Profile), Colchester Public Schools special education students comprised 17.0% of the student population compared to the State average of 15.6%.

5. At what age do children begin to receive special education services?

The District assumes responsibility for children in need of special education services beginning on their third birthday. In Connecticut, the task of assessing and serving special needs children before the age of three is the responsibility of the Birth to Three System.

6. Are parents required to pay for the extra costs of educating children with special education?

No. By law, the responsibility for costs associated with educating special education students, as with all students, rests fully upon the school district.

7. There are special education students who attend school out of the district. What is the cost of a special education out-of-district tuition, and how much annually does the district pay in total?

Tuition can range from $50,000 to $250,000 depending upon the facility. For the proposed budget for 2021-22, the district is projecting to pay a total of $1,782,461 in tuition.

8. How much funding does the State provide for special education compared to the costs?

The Special Education Excess Costs that the town received are based on 4.5 times the district's Per Pupil Expenditures for any out of district placement. This means that the district is responsible for the first 4.5 PPE and then the state reimburses the town any amount above that number.

9. How much does the state reimburse the town for any special education out of district tuition that is paid out?

The amount of reimbursement depends upon who places the child. For a child placed out of district by the Colchester Public Schools, reimbursement is provided for tuition costs that exceed 4.5 times the per pupil costs to educate a student. For a child placed out of district by a State Agency, e.g., Department of Children and Families (DCF), reimbursement is provided for tuition costs that exceed 1 times the per pupil costs to educate a student. Reimbursement is made to the town, not to the Board of Education.

PRESCHOOL

10. Currently, how many preschool children do we serve?

We serve approximately 90 preschool students each school year.

11. Does the school system provide transportation to all preschool children?

Transportation is available for students who receive preschool special education services. Students who do not receive special education services are not entitled to transportation services.

12. Who pays for preschool tuition?

Parents of special education students do not pay tuition. Parents of all other children attending the preschool program pay tuition.

TUITION

13. How many Colchester Public School students will participate in magnet schools next year?

The 2021-2022 budget projects that 36 students will participate in magnet schools.

14. What is the cost to the district for magnet school tuition?

The projected costs for the 2021-2022 school year for the magnet schools is $184,691.

15. Are there other programs that Colchester Public Schools for pay tuition and/or transportation?

Yes, below are the projected costs for the 2021-22 school year for the following programs that we are required by law to pay for:

- **Tuition:** Lebanon Vo-Ag $75,053 for 11 students (no tuition for technical schools)
- **Transportation**: Vo-Ag & Technical Schools $225,307
- **Other Transportation:** In a typical year, students who are identified as in need of non-special education intervention services at WJJMS and BA have the opportunity to be provided after school support and be transported home via a bus or van. Funding for this transportation is provided by the Title I federal grant.

16. If a special education student attends a magnet school, who is responsible for the costs of the special education services, the magnet school or CPS?

Colchester Public Schools is responsible for the special education and related services costs for any Colchester student who attends a Magnet School. Colchester is responsible for the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process that determines the special education and related services needed for each child. In addition, as of this year, districts are now responsible for the costs of any accommodations and/or related services required in a 504 plan for magnet school students.

17. How many students pay tuition to attend Colchester Public Schools?

In the current school year there are 23 students enrolled from Norwich and 4 additional students paying tuition.

General

18. What is the Difference between coaches and interventionists?

Coaches - Certified staff who have specialized certifications and/or training in reading or math. Work with teachers to review student learning, co-lesson plan, observe and reflect with the teacher.

Intervention Specialists - certified staff who have specialized certifications and/or training in reading or math. Review whole-school student learning data, identify students with lagging skills, arrange for interventions aimed at meeting student needs, provide interventions or support paraprofessionals to provide interventions to individual students or student groups.

Paraprofessionals - Non-certified staff who fulfill a variety of roles within the district. When assigned to intervention labs, paraprofessionals work directly with students to provide them interventions aimed at addressing specific student skill needs.

19. What types of services do homebound students receive?

Homebound students receive instruction from tutors in their coursework as well as any support services to which they are entitled, e.g., counseling or speech and language services based on a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

20. Is the Board of Education required to provide an education for students expelled from school?

By law the Board of Education must provide an alternative education opportunity, e.g., at least two hours of tutoring per day, for students through the age of 18 who are expelled. The school district is not obligated to provide an alternative education to students' ages 16-18 who have been expelled previously, or to students over the age of 18. If the student being expelled is a special education student, the district is required to offer an alternative education program, which is determined by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT). For all expelled students, once the student is admitted to an alternative education placement, an Individualized Education Plan (ILP) must be developed to govern the programming for the student for the period of the expulsion. Through collaboration among school personnel, the student, and the parent/guardian, an ILP will be developed to inform and direct the student's learning goals and activities for the duration of the expulsion. *(Ref. Section 10-233d of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) laws concerning alternative education (C.G.S. Sections 10-74j and 10-74k) and expulsions (C.G.S. Section 10-233d, as amended by Public Act 17-220).*

21. Is the student breakfast/lunch program included in the Board of Education budget?

No, the Colchester Food Service program is self-sufficient and self-funded, however, the food service staff are Board employees and the Board is ultimately responsible for any deficits associated with the program. Beginning in March 2020 to the present (March 2021), breakfast/lunch was subsidized by the Board of Education's local budget from savings that were realized as a result of the pandemic closure in spring 2020. Currently, the District is pursuing the option of using federally funded grants to offset the cost of school meals.

22. What is the district's per pupil expenditure?

The 2019-2020 Net Current Expenditures per Pupil (NCEP) was $17,304 (most recent data).

23. How many buses do we use daily to transport students to and from school?

For the current school year Colchester Public Schools utilizes approximately 23 buses and vans for approximately 2220 students.

24. If the Board of Education has money left over in its budget at the end of the fiscal year, can the funds be carried over to the next school year?

Funds in the Board of Education budget must be expended in the year in which they were appropriated. The Town and Board of Education have a long-standing agreement that any unexpended BOE budgeted funds at the end of the fiscal year are available to be appropriated back to the BOE for future capital and non-recurring expenditures

25. Is the Colchester Adult Education Program a part of the Board of Education budget or the town's budget?

The Colchester Board of Education partners with VRABE Adult Education Program to provide mandated and other adult education courses. The program is partially funded by the Board of Education budget and partially funded by a State grant and through fees paid for non-mandated classes. It is not in the town's budget.

26. Is any part of the Adult Education program mandated by law?

Yes. Required programs include instruction in Americanization and United States citizenship, English for adults who have limited proficiency in the English language or whose native language is not English, Adult Basic Education, and GED (General Education Diploma) preparation classes. State law requires that adult education services be provided by local school districts, free of charge, to any adult 17 years of age or older who is not enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school program**.**

27. How is allocation of funds for library books determined throughout the school system?

Allocation for library books is based upon a school's projected enrollment for the upcoming year. The rate per student is set at $5 per student at CES/JJIS, $7 per student at WJJMS, and $8 per student at BA. Library Media Specialists work individually and as a team to identify new texts that match the interest levels of students and curricular needs of faculty.

28. Will the education budget ever have funding for athletic fields or will this only come from the town budget?

The Town and the Board of Education have a cost sharing agreement that places the responsibility for grounds maintenance with the Public Works Department. This department works with both the district administration and the First Selectman to determine the proposed budget for maintaining all town property. In regard to athletic fields, we are very aware that Bacon Academy does not have sufficient field space for all of its sports teams for the fall and spring. The fields are used constantly for practices and games and so do not have time to recover and typically show wear and tear by the end of the season. In regard to a turf field, installing and annual maintenance are cost prohibitive and there are other priorities for each of our buildings that take precedence.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

29. When was the last time we submitted an RFP or a competitive bid for all district related insurances? When was the last time we submitted an RFP or a competitive bid for all employee benefits?

The district and towns insurance brokers, USI and Lockton, actively pursue options for all types of insurance every year.

30. Does the Board pay social security for certified staff?

No. Certified staff do not pay into the Social Security System for certified staff, rather they pay into the Connecticut Teacher Retirement System. The Board of Education makes no social security payments on behalf of certified staff.

31. Does the Board pay any part of teacher retirement?

No. Teachers pay into the Connecticut Teacher Retirement Board. The Colchester Board of Education pays no part of a teacher's retirement.

32. Does the Board pay health benefits for retired teachers?

All retired teachers are allowed to remain on the health insurance for active employees of their last district until such time as they choose to transition to the State TRB plan. Since we are self-insured, claims incurred for this group are part of the funding contribution from the BOE budget. Many teachers retire before age 65. However, the cost of the TRB plan will continue to be paid by the district.

33. What is our process for budgeting for retirements?

Under specific bargaining agreements some staff are eligible for retirement benefits. Any teacher or administrator who is eligible and intends to retire must inform the district by October 1 of the preceding year to ensure that we can accurately account for both their retirement and their replacement (if applicable).

FINANCE

34. Is there an annual audit of the school system's financial activity?

Yes. The audit firm of PKF O'Connor Davies is hired by the town to audit both the town and school system finances. The audit includes the general fund, grant funds, food service and student activity funds as required by law.

35. Do the CPS and the town use the same vendor for office supplies to receive the best possible discount?

Generally school systems receive greater discounts than municipalities due mainly to greater volume, a wider scope of products, and school specialty items. In addition, we also take advantage of a number of procurement consortiums like Capital Region Education Consortium (CREC) and the State-wide bid list to ensure we are getting the best competitive prices. Both the town and the district use the same consortiums when possible.

36. Please distinguish between unappropriated reserve and capital reserve.

A. Assigned Fund Balance

At the end of each fiscal year, budgeted appropriations lapse for any funds that have not been expended or encumbered. Per a joint resolution adopted by the BOF, BOS and BOE in December 2005, the BOE Capital Reserve Fund was established. Per this resolution, any Unexpended/Unencumbered BOE budgeted funds shall be appropriated to the BOE Capital Reserve Fund following the requirements

of the Town Charter as it pertains to appropriations. Any such unexpended/unencumbered funds are reflected as Assigned Fund Balance in the Town's audited financial statements until such time that the funds are appropriated.
As noted, these funds have not been appropriated, and cannot be expended until appropriated.

BOE Capital Reserve:
The BOE Capital Reserve Fund reflects balances of appropriations that have been approved and are accounted for in this fund.

37. What staff is shared between the town and the district?

Employees that are shared between the Board of Education and the Town of Colchester include the Director of Human Resources, the Chief Financial Officer, the Deputy Chief Financial Officer, the Accountant, Payroll/Employee Benefits/Accounts Payable Manager, and two Payroll/Accounts Payable Assistants.

38. Besides Long Range planning for the Technology Department, what other long-range plans does the Colchester Public Schools have?

In addition to the technology plan, Colchester Public Schools currently has a long-range plan for curriculum development and implementation, instructional improvement and staff development, distributive leadership and systems improvement, and security and safety. The district is currently developing long-range facility plans in mechanicals and building envelopes, a furniture and fixtures plan, and a district-wide scientific research-based intervention (SRBI) plan.